

VZCZCXYZ0002

RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHPE #2322/01 1872224
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 062224Z JUL 07
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6084
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7441

UNCLAS LIMA 002322

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

Brasilia for Story

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [SOCI](#) [ALOW](#) [AMED](#) [AODE](#) [ECON](#) [USTR](#) [PE](#)

SUBJECT: AIR POLLUTION IN LIMA WORSENING

¶1. SUMMARY: A recent report issued by Peru's National Institute for Statistics and Information (INEI) concludes that Lima's air quality is deteriorating. For example, airborne lead particles have increased by 119 percent compared with 2006. All of the air pollutant levels for Lima are significantly worse than those of downtown Los Angeles, and particulate matter (PM 2.5) levels are more than six times higher than U.S. EPA standards. The city's chaotic transportation is a principal reason for this pollution. The GOP needs to address the factors that are linked to political authority and municipal responsibility. The city is home to over one-third of Peru's 28 million inhabitants, and the metropolitan area accounts for almost half of the country's \$93 billion GDP. End Summary.

¶2. A report issued in April by the INEI measured the following five air quality components to determine the degree of pollution in downtown Lima: total suspended particles (TSP), particles smaller than 2.5 micrometers in diameter (PM 2.5), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2), Sulfur Dioxide (SO2), and Lead (Pb) levels. All of these, with the exception of TSP, are directly linked to vehicle emissions into the atmosphere.

WORSE THAN L.A. IN ALL MEASURES

¶3. In 2007, all five measures showed an increase compared to last year's levels:

- TSP was 257 micrograms/cubic meter;
- PM 2.5 was 94.49 micrograms/cubic meter;
- NO2 was 69.47 micrograms/cubic meter (up 7%),
- SO2 was 63.66 micrograms/cubic meter (Up 19%);
- Lead was 0.23 micrograms/cubic meter (up 119%)

Lima's PM 2.5 level is 6.3 times higher than U.S. EPA standards. The air quality in Lima is much worse than in downtown Los Angeles for all the pollutants measured: lead is about 50 times worse, NO2 is about 23 percent worse, PM 2.5 is about 6 times worse, and SO2 is more than 12 times worse (LA info source: U.S. EPA).

MOTOR VEHICLES TO BLAME

¶4. According to INEI, the main reason for this rise in pollution has to do with the age and quantity of the city's vehicles. The average age of public transportation vehicles is 22 years. Transportation problems are not a novel issue in Peru. In a recent report, the World Bank considered public transportation in Lima as deficient and chaotic. According to this report, there are a total of 10.5 million trips made daily in Lima, 81 percent of which are made using public transportation, including taxis. Less than half of the 56,000 public transportation vehicles currently operating are authorized to do so. There is one taxi for every 42 people in Lima, while in Buenos Aires, Argentina, there is one for every 233 people.

¶5. The constant vehicle emissions are concentrated in the central

area of the city, and it is estimated that between 70 to 80 percent of Lima's pollution is caused by vehicles. The main causes cited by the World Bank are: composition and age of the vehicles, lack of emissions controls, excess supply of vehicles, low quality of fuels, and bad traffic. The transportation system consists largely of privately-owned late-model buses and taxis.

¶6. These vehicular problems cause 13.2 million liters of gasoline to be needlessly used in Lima per year. The problems also cause the emission of 1,000 metric tons of additional contaminants into the air, particularly particulate material, Nitrogen Oxides, and Sulfur Oxides. This high degree of environmental pollution generates a high rate of respiratory illnesses, asthma and skin problems, especially in children.

¶7. Beyond deregulating the transportation sector during the 1990s (incentives were given for the massive imports of used vehicles from Asia), the GOP has done little. A project for a much needed emissions control facility was recently abandoned because of issues in determining which government authority would supervise it. Furthermore, some GOP policies have the opposite effect. The government currently encourages dirty fuels by imposing higher taxes on cleaner fuels such as 90 octane gasoline and lower taxes on more contaminating fuels such as diesel.

COMMENT: POLITICAL WILL NEEDED

¶8. Given that these pollution measurements show that Lima's air is worse than that of downtown Los Angeles, it's no surprise that residents here, including Embassy employees, experience increased problems with asthma and other respiratory illnesses. However, with social and poverty issues taking up the GOP's time, reducing air pollution is not a government priority. The pollution control problems are compounded because the GOP has not even defined roles for its agencies regarding public transportation and the environment. Coordination between the Lima and adjacent Callao municipalities has also been traditionally limited. A broader approach to reform is needed that will establish clear functions between government entities, create incentives for renewal of vehicles, and encourage rather than discourage environmental conservation. Increased attention to environmental protection embodied in the pending U.S.-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement (PTPA) might help convince the GOP to focus more on improving the air quality in Peru's capital.

STRUBLE